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ABSTRACT

This collection of articles serves as a record of some of the deliberations of members of the Academy for Torah Initiatives and Directions (ATID) (Jerusalem, Israel). The collection captures the collective thinking that the ATID fellows and faculty members underwent as they explored methods of transforming prayer in Jewish schools into a more meaningful experience. Articles in the collection are: "Reflections on Role Models for Spirituality and Prayer" ("Devarim She-Ba'al Peh al Avobah She-ba-Lev") (Chaim Brovender); "Response" (Joel B. Wolowelsky); and "Educating toward Meaningful 'Tefillah': Some Suggestions for Orthodox Jewish Secondary Schools--Notes from the Deliberations of the ATID Fellows" (Prayer and Inwardness; Prayer as a Social Activity; Prayer for Girls and Young Women). (BT)

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Educating Toward Meaningful Jewish Prayer (Tefillah). Notes from ATID.

Yoel Finkelman, Editor

Academy for Torah Initiatives and Directions, Jerusalem (Israel).

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Edited by Yoel Finkelman

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Notes from ATID: Educating Toward Meaningful Tefillah

An Invitation

Educating Jewish children is a holy task. Those entrusted with the task must develop the sophistication to succeed, and to lead this enterprise to new levels of accomplishment. **The Academy for Torah Initiatives and Directions** encourages the young educators in the **ATID Fellows** training program to develop a vision for themselves and the community they will lead. But that is not enough - ATID also focuses on the strategies necessary to actualize and implement the theory and vision.

We present these ***Notes from ATID: Educating Toward Meaningful Tefillah***, first in this series, which is a record of our deliberations on this topic. This document captures the collective thinking which the ATID fellows and faculty members underwent as we explored methods of transforming prayer in our schools into a moremeaningful experience.

We do not imagine that these policy recommendations are a panacea, nor do we believe that our findings will be appropriate for all schools. With this in mind, we have included a dissenting response to some of our proposals. We do believe that if properly implemented, they may indeed succeed in many settings. More significantly, we are convinced that these suggestions can serve as a springboard for rigorous deliberation in your schools. Each school can develop specific and implementable strategies which will improve the *tefillah* of the students and staff.

The distribution of this essay allows ATID to disseminate some of its ideas to the community of Jewish educators. We hope to encourage further reflection and planning, in order to improve the rigor, professionalism, and success of our important endeavor. Our sincere appreciation is extended to

Yoel Finkelman, whose yeoman efforts, talent and sensitivity saw this project through to publication. Our thanks are also extended to Prof. Susan Handelman, who was instrumental in facilitating many of the initial discussions and deliberations of the ATID Fellows, upon which this monograph is based.

ATID will be honored to help facilitate your explorations and planning by providing resources, either written or human. If this essay has served as a catalyst for your school or synagogue, we ask that you share your experiences with us by writing to atid@atid.org. We will use our website to collect and disseminate your contributions to what we hope will be an ongoing collaborative inquiry into the critical issues facing Jewish education today.

Rabbi Jeffrey Saks

Director, ATID

www.atid.org

Reflections on Role Models for Spirituality & Prayer
Devarim She-Ba'al Peh al Avodah She-ba'Lev

Rabbi Chaim Brovender

There is no reason in the world for educators to assume that *tefillah* can't be meaningful.

However, it is not at all clear how one learns to *daven*. Many of us undergo a training period which ultimately makes it possible for us to participate in some form of *davening*. But training a person to spend an appropriate amount of time in the synagogue is not the same as training him for *davening* itself. Convincing a child of the value, importance, and necessity of attending prayers or reciting the words is not equivalent to preparing that child to be open to the inner experience of spiritual, soulful prayer.

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An individual cannot simply make a conscious decision to pray properly. Rather, the person must first become intimately aware of the possibility of genuine prayer, an awareness that we are directed to engender in ourselves. We must invest serious time and serious energy to become aware that the prayer process is possible, and that we can actually join that process. Not everyone accomplishes this - not even everyone who is trained from childhood to *daven*. But it seems to be a position that one can assume if he or she is so inclined, or if so directed by teachers and parents.

Educators must not confuse the discipline of *davening* with *davening* itself. Both are necessary and both have to be taught, but we do our students a disservice if we confuse the two in our teaching. This confusion makes it impossible for students to address the *real* problems of their own *davening*. Clearly, certain discipline is necessary for proper *davening*. The time, place, words and their meaning are all important, as well as the community in

which prayer occurs. But none of these is equivalent to *davening* in its essence. We sell our students short, and are to blame for our own failure, if we concentrate only on the form, and do not enable our students to discover the substance of prayer. All students have the potential to pray seriously.

Ironically, *halakhah* itself allows for this confusion. It is easy enough to become involved with the minutiae of the event, and ignore the fact that there is a spirit, an ethos, that has to be grasped. We are not only the teachers of the details of the *halakhic* demands and concerns (though we certainly are that as well). We must also enable and empower the students to find and activate their own spiritual core - even in this pragmatic world.

We must also enable and empower the students to find and activate their own spiritual core.

Nevertheless, there is a form - and a rather rigid one at that - to our *davening*, and that form is determined by *halakhic* considerations. As such it is of singular importance to us when we approach Hashem. Since *halakhah* in some way expresses God's will - by teaching us how we are to stand before Him - then it would be remiss on our part to ignore that feature of the *halakhah*. In fact, the student should understand that the "laws of prayer" are the rules which Hashem and *Chazal* have commanded us, and which enable us to petition Him with great sincerity andmeaning. However, the rules will not necessarily resonate in the hearts of the petitioners, nor generate a spiritual experience automatically. We must go further and teach ourselves to find the proper attitude to prayer from within. This is not something which can be taught through traditional modes of teaching, but is a process of discovery that we as educatorsmustallowandencourage.

Teaching Prayer

Prayer is a natural event deriving from the human psyche, and is capable, if properly engaged, of enhancing one's personality. Prayer is implied in creation itself. If God created the world, it is reasonable that His creatures should be able to turn to and speak with their Father in heaven. It seems

universally true that people *do* indeed pray. We have a real need to place ourselves before the Creator of the world, and enter into a dialogue with Him. For those who have taken this step, prayer is an obvious, even a simple affair, which can be done under almost any circumstance. The fact that the *halakhah* prevents us from prayer in certain circumstances, in inappropriate place for example, indicates that such a desire to pray in such a place is not entirely out of the question.

Given that this need is so basic, how can we teach ourselves and others to be natural about davening? How can we be honest in estimating ourselves, and protect our basic need to address our great Father in heaven? How do we become part of the community of petitioners? How do we organize our hands, our feet, our hearts and our souls in such a way that we are not simply caricatures of the praying person, but genuine prayerful petitioners? How can we feel that we are on the road to devotion? How do we convince ourselves that we are engaged in something meaningful, and not merely another of the many false directions that onemight take in life?

How can we be honest in estimating ourselves, and protect our basic need to address our great Father in heaven?

Clearly, we must distinguish between the behaviorist success of some modern institutions and our true aspirations for prayer.

For many, the answer is found in the person who becomes our role model - a person who we can imitate, and who leads us in the direction of authentic *tefillah*. It is hard to describe this person with accuracy, but that doesn't mean that he or she doesn't exist. In fact, if we think carefully we may find him inside of us: the memory of a grandparent or parent, *rebbe* or teacher. We all know someone who we were sure was actually deep in conversation with Hashem. While we cannot prove this, we are nonetheless certain that it is true. There can be no prayer, neither individual or communal, unless everyone who participates is confident that prayer is available to him/her. It is our role models that provide this confidence.

If we are able to focus in our own *davening* on our role model we will be able to bridge the gap between the technical, behaviorist aspects of the enterprise, and the inner spiritual phenomenon. If we imagine the role model *davening* with us, if we are able to stand and say the *Shemoneh Esreh* with the role model at our side, then we can move ourselves in the direction of genuine self-expressive prayer, without the behaviorist, rote experience that we know too well.

If we keep all the above in mind when we try to implement prayer in schools or *yeshivot* we might concern ourselves with the following:

First, all participants must come to *daven*. This means that a man wearing *tefillin* or a woman standing with a *siddur* in hand cannot be involved with discipline. There is no room while *davening* for other mundane events. This is difficult to implement for two reasons. First, there are indeed real disciplinary issues that occasionally have to be dealt with, and only the teachers can deal with them. More important however, is the fact that many adult davening centers (synagogues) struggle with the same discipline problems as do the schools. The participants often do not *daven* seriously and the monitor (also called "Rabbi") has to try to deal with the issue in as reasonable way as possible. It is often difficult for the Rabbi to convince the people who pay his salary that they should be attentive to the *tefillah* and not disturb - but he keeps trying. The children who attend synagogue on Shabbat learn how to behave in shul, and bring these problematic mores to school. Many rabbis or teachers attempt to do damage control in school, but the students may have learned that they can simply return to their prior behavior with impunity if they are silent for a short while.

There is no room while *davening* for other mundane events.

Davening in school must be special, noteworthy, and very serious. This can only be accomplished if the most serious people (in the eyes of the students) themselves participate. If my talking would make it impossible for "Rabbi X" or "Teacher Y" to *daven* properly, if I feel that I am depriving him/her of doing the *mitzvah* as well as possible, that feeling itself might work positively

to control my own actions in *davening*. If I as a student sense that my teacher is present primarily to maintain decorum (while also going through the motions of prayer), I may not feel the same responsibility to help create a prayerful atmosphere.

Students must also be made aware that everyone - *themselves included* - is a potential role model. We are all capable of opening the door of prayer to those who are standing next to us. This is a powerful notion which must be emphasized. Those who come to *daven* have a responsibility to be role models, which can have a determining effect on those who are standing nearby. The teachers, the rebbes, and even the students, must be filled with awe at the thought that they are positioned such that they might have an effect. This idea can only work its way down from the top, from those who already know that this is their responsibility. This has to be emphasized by deed and word so that all participants understand what their responsibility to the prayerful community is. Only then can a child take his or her place in the great opportunity ofmeaningful dialogue with the Divine.

Response

Dr. Joel B. Wolowelsky

As important as it is to work towards a meaningful prayer experience for our students, I would like to put in a note for a lowering of expectations. That is not to say that we should be satisfied with a mediocre *tefillah*; it is rather to remember that the nature of high school education is to keep trying, even though the external environment works against us. We keep pushing for appreciation of literature, but even the most successful teacher cannot compete on every level with television. We can offer the most inspirational prayer service, but we will not be able to compete with the lessons learned each Shabbat in the shuls. But, of course, we have to keep working towards our goals.

I would want to add a comment regarding the suggestion that teachers and administrators present not be the disciplinarians, and that this function be reserved for an adult who is not praying with the group. I think this is an

unproductive - indeed, counterproductive - policy. A teacher or administrator who sees someone disturbing the prayer service but who does not respond because he or she is too involved in their own prayer is sending a very negative message. It is unreasonable for the student to think that these adults are not conscious of their disturbance; they rather conclude that the only reason people object is that it is their job to do so. People who really care about prayer are upset when others disturb them and they say something about it.

Most teenagers are not religious philosophers. If they are "sitting out" *tefillah* while with the group, they are most probably troubled by something - and that is usually not a religious issue. A teacher who sees that a student is troubled, but looks the other way sends a message of indifference. After all, it is not only guidance counselors who are supposed to speak with students; all teachers should. Many years ago, I finally approached a student about his general gloomy demeanor. At the end of the conversation, after he had spelled out a host of family conflicts, I asked him, why did you wait for me to approach you? Why didn't you come to me to discuss this? He reply is still informative: What's the matter with you, he asked. I sat in front of you in *minyan* for three weeks staring at a *siddur* held upside down. Don't you notice these sort of things?

People who really care about prayer are upset when others disturb them and they say something about it.

That is why I oppose an alternate prayer service where students can talk *about* prayer instead of praying. It is a sorry substitute for personal counseling. Students in a *yeshivah* should be able to sit quietly in *tefillah* if they are not up to *davening*. They should have the opportunity to talk out their issues in a counseling environment. We should not send them a message that we have given up on them.

Of course, counseling does not help everyone. Some students continue to refuse to do their homework, to remain quiet in class, or to pass exams even though they have the ability to do so. We keep trying, insisting first of all that

they not disturb the class and then helping them live up to their potential. We don't always succeed. We keep trying.

Issues regarding *tefillah* or general religious observance are admittedly more important than the specific subjects we teach, be they Jewish or general studies. Nonetheless, we have to treat them as subjects taught in a school. We have to teach a love of reading, but we have to end the discussion when the bell rings. We have to provide opportunities for appreciating the great potential *tefillah* has, but we have to demand attendance and the decorum that keeps our everyday lives moving forward.

Educating Toward Meaningful Tefillah:
Some Suggestions for
Orthodox Jewish Secondary Schools
Notes from the Deliberations of the ATID Fellows

Tefillah is Difficult

Praying seriously is difficult, and teaching others to pray seriously is still more difficult. Many of our students do not know how to pray seriously, and have little desire to do so. As Jewish educators we must face the challenges associated with prayer head on. We will not succeed in completely solving the age-old struggle with meaningful *tefillah*, but we can not afford to ignore it. Even if prayer in our schools is characterized by regular attendance, by silence and discipline - and this is no small feat - how many of our students (and ourselves) pray regularly with genuine *kavanah*. Prayer should be included in the curriculum, and not relegated to a formal "opening ceremony" of the school day. This curriculum must include more than just the laws of prayer. Our students should learn not only what the prayers mean, but also what the concept of prayer itself means. Students may learn that *tefillah* can transform the individual when they come in contact with role models (whether in person, or through texts) who do pray properly,

people who have been transformed by prayer, people who they can relate to as serious *mitpallelim*.

Improving prayer education requires schools to expend some of their limited resources on the issue. Educators should create curriculum and methods devised to communicate the meaning of *tefillah* to our youth, and develop exercises to help students experience *kavanah* in *tefillah*. Administrators and teachers should concentrate on *tefillah* no less than they expend energy on improving scores on standardized tests. Concentration on prayer will never be perfect; we hope only to improve the Jewish people's eternal struggle with God and spirituality.

Each School is Different

The exact approach which any given school should adopt depends on the particular school's educational approach, its student body, and the community which it serves. There is no single "right answer" for the questions about prayer. This essay hopes to set out some issues which are critical for improving prayer in schools, and suggest some general directions for progress. We do not suggest detailed programs or curriculums, which may not be appropriate for every given environment. Instead, we suggest that each school - its administrators, teachers, parents, and students - find ways of suiting these directions for their particular school environment.

The schools which are succeeding in creating a spiritual environment and a prayer ethos are also schools which dedicate serious effort in planning and evaluating.

We found that the schools which *are* succeeding in creating a spiritual environment and a prayer ethos are also schools which dedicate serious effort in planning and evaluating this very topic. In one case, there is a weekly staff meeting dedicated to school-wide spiritual education (in general) and *tefillah* specifically. On many occaisions that meeting evaluates the status quo; at other times the agenda focuses on dealing with specific issues and problems. If there is no specific issue on the agenda, the teachers use the time to study together some text or teaching relating to *tefillah, penimiut,* etc.

1: Prayer and Inwardness

Prayer Requires Inwardness, One of the Meta-Goals of Jewish Education

Prayer with *kavanah* (however *kavanah* is defined) is not possible without a genuine spiritual inwardness, an honest religious experience, a measure of *penimiut*. Although *penimiut* cannot be defined precisely, there are certain personality traits and spiritual qualities in the family of things included in spirituality or *penimiut*: self-awareness, expressiveness, the capacity for self-examination, a serious God awareness (however God is conceived). It is difficult to imagine how *tefillah* with *kavanah* could possibly occur without the traits associated with *penimiut*.

The problems with reaching these educational meta-goals seem vast, and indeed present a serious challenge.

Obviously, the development of these traits is not merely the means to the end of improving prayer. These traits themselves are some of the overarching goals of Jewish education and child rearing. The problems with reaching these educational meta-goals seem vast, and indeed present a serious challenge.

Penimiut is Subjective - It Must be Experienced

First and foremost, *penimiut* is subjective, although no less real or important than objective aspects of prayer. An approach toward inward spirituality which appeals to one individual may repel his classmate. One student might find her personal spiritual outlet in music or dancing; another may find meaning in cerebral self-examination. Both of these outlets can be modeled around the halakhic requirements for prayer. If teachers adopt a single approach to spirituality, they will hit the mark with some students while leaving others frustrated, or worse, turned off by the very notion of inwardness. Hence, educators must focus on spiritual development in ways that allow a maximal amount of individual expressiveness and honesty, without superimposing a single form or model of spiritual maturity on the student.

Informal Education May Be More Effective in Focusing on Penimiut

Furthermore, inwardness can not be taught in a frontal way. We can expose students to examples of spirituality, and hope that they will find in themselves some of the spark which inspired the example. For this to work, of course, students must be exposed to both textual and personal examples of serious spirituality, and be encouraged to reflect on them. The tools of informal education may be best suited to this task, and schools might consider adopting some of the techniques often associated with youth groups and *shabbatonim*. Adolescent students, who are naturally immersed in the process of self-discovery and self-definition, may cherish the opportunity to reflect on their own religious experiences. Small groups, with students and staff who already know and trust one another, may use a short text (or other opener) to spark reflection on spiritual questions in general, or on prayer in particular. Students should be encouraged to speak their minds honestly, and teacher criticism of honest reflection should be minimized. Teachers, too, should be honest about their spiritual successes and failures. Honest communication - often lacking in the experience of contemporary teens - may help open up the doors to honest communication between us and God.

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Students Should Experience Different Styles of Kavanah and Prayer Teachers Should Appreciate the Student's Varying Experiences

Educators can help to mitigate the educational difficulties with subjectivity by exposing students to numerous approaches to the nature of *tefillah*. Students could learn a text - perhaps Rav Hirsch's description of prayer as critical self-examination, R. Soloveitchik's description of prayer as dialogue with God, or Hassidic sources on *hitbonenut* and *hitbodedut* - followed by an exercise in attempting to pray in that fashion. Students would be exposed to different kinds of prayer at different times, and would be more likely to discover a mode of prayer that matches their subjective inclinations.

Furthermore, *penimiut*, by definition, cannot be measured by outward appearances (*Tefillat Hannah* being the most obvious example). Educators must not confuse a fast *Shemonah Esreh*, for example, with lack of *kavanah* (or vice versa), for the student may be reflecting a style of inwardness different than the one the teacher is used to. During and after periods of serious focus on prayer, students should be given the opportunity to articulate their own experiences in *tefillah*, their successes and failures.

Adult Role Models Are Crucial

Students must have opportunities to witness examples of adult role models who do pray seriously. Teachers should pray in school and be sure that they focus on their own *kavanah*. Ideally, teachers should minimize (to the extent possible) their concentration on discipline (see below). The schools should find community members and alumni who pray with particular seriousness, and urge them to attend services in schools as well.

Allow for Changes and Experimentation

The ever changing and subjective experience of spirituality requires emphasis on changes and individuality, which even the fixed times and text of halakhic prayer allow. A renewed emphasis on *penimiut* will accentuate the individual's personal prayer experience. Rabbi Shimon's principle "*Al ta'as tefillatkha keva*" (Avot 2:13) may be understood to mean that we must find ways of inserting changing subjectivity into the fixed text. Students may be encouraged to think about what they would include in the *Shema Koleinu* prayer. There are aspects of public prayer that can mitigate against *kavanah*: the fixed text, the fixed times, the halakhic need (at times) to follow the pace of the community. Students might also be encouraged to pray privately, in addition to the times and places prescribed by the halakhah, particularly when difficult times (*has ve-shalom*) strike the individual, the school, or *Am Yisrael*. After all, one may offer personal prayers in addition to the ones mandated by the *halakhah*. Within the

Students should be given the opportunity to articulate their own experiences in *tefillah*, their successes and failures.

halakhically prescribed prayers, there are many things that can be modified from time to time. Regular changes in the outward trappings of school's *Tefillah* - like speed, public singing, our perhaps even *nusah* (when there are students whose families use different *nushaot*) may help expose students to different approaches, and help answer the need of ever-changing spirituality. Further, the very fact of these "cosmetic" changes helps prevent the routinization of the required prayer.

II: Prayer as a Social Activity

Public Prayer Both Creates and is a Reflection of the Community

With the emphasis on the personal and subjective aspects of prayer, we should not lose track of the fact that prayer, particularly *tefillah be-tzibur*, is a communal and social experience. Religious communities with a strong and active sense of group solidarity are more likely to pray together consistently. Alternatively, a well-attended prayer service can help create communal solidarity where it does not yet exist. Most praying Jews do not pray primarily because of an overwhelming drive for daily self-elevation. They attend services to a great degree because of youthful habit, formed by belonging to a community that places a premium on public prayer. Regular attendance helps participants feel a part of the community which surrounds the synagogue. Many regular participants in morning *minyan* do not concentrate intently on their prayers each and every day, and may spend much of the time talking to friends. We should not make light of the community-forming function of public prayer, even if it does not meet up with our ideal standards. Communal solidarity is not an easy thing for religious groups to create in the contemporary world, and it is valuable in and of itself.

Obviously, this does not mean that educational institutions should be satisfied with habitual prayer devoid of genuine spirit. But, it does mean that we must find ways of attaching students to the prayer communities both inside and outside of schools, and of indicating that the community as a whole considers prayer important, so that students will make the

minimum effort of attending services. This can be the basis upon which further prayer education rests. This essay can not hope to address the vast issue of creating community, both in a school environment and in the wider Orthodox community outside of school. Suffice it to say that much of a young Jew's religious socialization occurs outside the schools: in the home, with neighbors, in synagogues, in summer camps or youth groups. Other communal institutions should emphasize prayer no less than schools do.

Prayer Should be Habitual and Disciplined

Regular attendance and discipline are the stuff of which habit is made. Schools should not allow the discipline demanded during *tefillah* to be any different than what is expected in classes. Regular punctual attendance is a must, and schools should find ways of using both negative and (perhaps more importantly) positive reinforcement to motivate students. Students who arrive late, or not at all, to prayer, and who talk during *tefillah*, should be treated no differently than students who do not attend classes properly, even though some parents may consider prayer secondary to academic work.

Each school should find methods of discipline which match the overall school policy on these issues. (Further, schools may find ways of rewarding individuals or entire classes that attend prayer consistently and punctually.) Group rewards - in which the reward for the group is dependent on the performance of each individual - may help create peer pressure toward attending services. Assigned seating, and relatively wide spaces between seats, can help prevent talking among groups of friends who choose to sit next to each other. Prayer should start punctually, and the *gabbai* should assure that the prayers proceed smoothly, preventing the "down time" which creates opportunities for talking. Ideally, one staff member who has already prayed should be responsible for discipline, freeing other staff members for concentrated *tefillah*.

Communal solidarity is not an easy thing for religious groups to create in the contemporary world, and it is valuable in and of itself.

Allow Students Some Control

Within the confines of halakhah, students should be granted as much a say as possible in the structure and administration of *tefillah*. Like youth *minyanim* in synagogues or youth groups, schools should place maximal responsibility on the shoulders of youngsters to serve as *gabbaim, ba'alei tefillah, ba'alei keriah*, and in other administrative roles. This allows serious students to be involved in creating an atmosphere which other students will find most conducive for themselves and their peers. A *va'ad tefillah*, a kind of student council responsible for issues involving davening (with adequate adult supervision), is a model that has worked successfully in some schools. These suggestions may help youth feel a sense of belonging that is often missing for them in adult *minyanim*. When possible, staff should urge students who serve as leaders in other areas of school life (sports for example) to serve on the *va'ad tefillah*. If the social leaders in the school group take *tefillah* seriously, other students will follow their lead, for social if not for spiritual reasons.

Within the confines of halakhah, students should be granted as much a say as possible in the structure and administration of *tefillah*.

The Location and Environment

The location in which prayer takes place can send subtle but important messages about how the community and school view prayer. Although this is not always feasible, a separate *Beit Midrash* should be used only for prayer and Torah study. Even if this is not possible, the available space should be "transformed" in whatever ways possible to reflect the fact that something serious is going on. Rearrange the furniture in an all-purpose room, or at least place a *shtender* in the front of the classroom. The room should be well kept, clean, well lit, and conducive to concentration.

Encourage Participation from Alumni and the Wider Community

If their presence will contribute to the atmosphere, schools should encourage many adults to join school *tefillah*, without damaging the sense of a youth *minyan*. Staff members, parents, members of the larger community, and alumni (perhaps most importantly) should participate in

the school's minyan. These issues send a very strong message to students about how seriously the school and broader Jewish community takes prayer.

III: Prayer for Girls and Young Women

Unique Challenges for Women and Girls

One common notion circulating in the Orthodox community today is that women are not obligated in public prayer due to their natural and inner spirituality, which expresses itself without many of the formal trappings which men require. Whatever level of truth this generalization may or may not contain, it must not become an excuse for negligent treatment of women's *tefillah* education. It is too easy to suggest that women's supposed natural spirituality will bubble up by itself, regardless of the kind of education we provide and *tefillah* atmosphere we create. Contemporary women are faced with profound challenges in their daily lives, from raising families, to earning a living, to the self-realization found in developing careers, to keeping a home, etc. Amid these numerous daily activities, there is often little natural opportunity for prayer, especially without the rigid structure imposed by the man's formalized and public obligations. The unique aspects of women's prayer education become more critical as students get older, as gender differences become more important to them as individuals, as they become more competent to pray on their own, and as theirmalecounterparts begin to attend structured *minyanim*.

Many high schools for young women provide relatively unstructured time for the young women to *daven*. Students arrive late, pray quickly (or not at all) in the classroom, and hurry off to study for exams or socialize with friends. Sometimes, a single *hazanit* leads her classmates in *tefillah*, which is held in the classroom briefly before the beginning of formal studies, while the teacher looks on. More than reflecting an attitude of natural spirituality, this can reflect lack of seriousness, which students internalize quickly. However we approach female prayer in schools, it should be done with the utmost forethought, in an environment of seriousness that is as free from

distractions as possible. Teachers and other female staff members should certainly pray together with their pupils.

Flexibility as an Advantage

Schools can use women's more flexible requirements in prayer as an advantage. Although it is important that women learn a close experiential and emotional attachment to the text of the *siddur* (both halakhically and in terms of attachment to the davening of the larger Orthodox community), women have much more freedom than men to improvise. Within the basic structure that the *siddur* offers, women can more easily add or subtract in terms of the text, structure, message, content, style, music, and time. Thus, while *kaddish* and *hazarat ha-shatz* will not be recited in an all-women's environment, there is more room for public singing, for personal prayers that move beyond the text of the *siddur*, and for improvisation in areas of structure and content. Further, this atmosphere can give the students themselves greater input in how their prayer happens, fine tuning the school's *davening* to match the student's experience and desires. (Again, the influence of an active *va'ad tefillah* can be significant in this respect).

Balancing Contradictory Values

This flexibility leaves women in a bind. On the one hand, it is obviously critical that women should feel comfortable in the synagogue and in the environment of public prayer. Many Orthodox schools, and the communities which support them, urge female students to be involved in other aspects of public Judaism and to develop careers. These women must remain involved, in some way or another, in aspects of *tefillah be-tzibur*. On the other hand, women are not obligated in public prayer, and are proscribed from serving as prayer leaders of the *minyan*. Furthermore, during the years of child rearing, most women simply will not be able to attend public services more than once a week. It is critical that women become particularly adept at the art of individual prayer. Each community and school should find a way of balancing these often contradictory values, in the spirit of its own approach to women's education and women's role in general, and in a way that will bemosteffective for the student body.

It is critical that women become particularly adept at the art of individual prayer.

Women and Public Prayer in Co-Ed and Single Sex Schools

A school which emphasizes the public aspects of prayer may adopt many of the formalized and structured aspects of public prayer, and adapt them for young women's education. Without entering the debate over women's prayer groups, there are many less controversial methods of using a structured environment as a tool in the *tefillah* education of young women. The structured environment will help ensure that students in fact pray, and that they feel part of a praying school community. In co-ed high-schools, structure is provided by the men's *minyan*, even as the female participants sit in the *ezrat nashim*. Some would argue that even in single-sex schools, women should be urged to find their prayer outlet within the *ezrat nashim* of a *minyan*. They should be taught to attend *minyan* regularly when not in school. Schools with this approach might work to insure that a regular *minyan* occurs on the campus of the school on a daily basis, whether comprised of the young men who attend a co-ed school, school staff members, or local parents and adults. This approach has the advantage of teaching women to be involved in the most formal public prayer, and can create a close attachment to *tefillah be-tzibur*. But it can also contribute to a sense of non-participation and passivity, or a sense that prayer is the province ofmenonly.

A single-sex environment introduces other advantages. Prayer can still be relatively formalized, with all students and teachers praying together. Ideally, *tefillah* will occur in a room dedicated solely for that purpose, or at least in a large auditorium set up for prayer, in order to create a sense of *davening* together as a group. The *nusah* will be formalized, a *hazanit* will help keep the pace and encourage group singing. Students in this context, as we have indicated above, will have a fair amount of input to personalize the school's *tefillah* to match the student body, and even to change things within the prayer from time to time, hoping to combat boredom or repetitiveness.

Frustrations for Women Who are Involved in Public Prayer

Women who internalize this kind of education may develop frustrations during the years of child rearing, when access to daily or even weekly *minyan* will be difficult. Educators would be smart to bring up this issue with their students early on, and help prepare them for the inevitable frustration.

It should be noted, however, that proper men's education can help to alleviate this issue to some degree. If future husbands are taught that they are expected to put in the effort to daven at an early *minyan* in order to allow their wives to attend a later one (at least on Shabbat and holidays), it will do quite a bit to alleviate some women's frustration.

Women and Tefillat Yahid

Other schools and communities might put greater emphasis on *tefillat yahid* for women. More intense and honest *tefillah* for women may occur outside the formalized context of a timely men's *minyan*. They will argue that women are not obligated in public prayer, and should not be encouraged to participate in it. Young women should learn from personal and family role models the power of in-home private prayer. Especially during the years of child raising, women will have a more natural outlet for prayer if they learn to pray alone. It is clear, however, that this approach places a greater measure of importance for *tefillah* education on the home, and is dependent on a student body whose mothers and sisters are likely to serve as role models of private prayer. School prayer, in its place, would try to mimic private prayer to the greatest degree possible. Students would pray whatever text they choose (within halakhic guidelines), at their own pace, and in the presence of a relatively small group of people. It will be imperative for the schools to combat the sense of *hefkerut* that can come with this approach. In part, this could be done by spending some time in a group just before davening, learning about the meaning of specific prayers, or learning sources about the nature of prayer. Teachers and staff members should certainly say their own *tefillot* together with the students. Students who finish *tefillah* before their classmates should be encouraged to learn Torah quietly, and should certainly be prohibited from preparing homework or talking with friends.

Schools would be wise to find an approach that most closely matches the schools' outlook.

Finding the Middle Ground

Needless to say, there is quite a bit of middle ground between these two approaches, and schools would be wise to find an approach that most

closely matches the schools' outlook, and which will work best for the population of young women who attend the school. In large degree, one's attitude toward these questions should depend on the school's overall approach to women's education, the community which the female students derive from, and the availability of female role models who pray intensely in the homes of the students.

- **School staff should hold regular staff meetings for the specific purpose of evaluating and improving prayer.** They should ask what currently works well about their school's *tefillah*, and what does not. The strategies that they develop must account for the unique problems in that school's *tefillah*, as well as the nature of the student body, the community from which the students come, and the schools' overall educational approach.

- **Informal education and *shabbatonim*,** techniques that are often the province of youth movements only, can be better suited than formal classrooms for encouraging students to reflect on their subjective spiritual experiences in general, and prayer in particular. Schools should incorporate some of these techniques in their curriculum.

- **Expose students to many visions of *kavanah* and ideal prayer.** A Hassidic or emotional approach to prayermight excite one student, while another requires a more cerebral posture. Learn diverse texts with students, and encourage more experienced *mitpalelim* to reflect on their experiences with the students.

- **Expose students to role models who pray seriously.** Teachers who are responsible for discipline should have davened elsewhere, freeing other staff members to pray as seriously as possible in the presence of their students. Invite serious community members and school alumni to pray with the school on a regular basis.

- **Place students in positions of responsibility for their own prayer.** Appoint serious students to a *va'ad hatefillah*, which can help set

the agenda for improving prayer in the school. Be sure that students serve as *gabbaim*, *ba'alei tefillah*, and *ba'alei keriah*.

- **When a separate *Beit Midrash* for prayer and learning is not available, make the location in which *tefillah* occurs distinctive and conducive to concentration and seriousness.**
  Seats should be comfortable, and the room well lit. Rearranging the furniture and demanding more formal dress during prayer can lend a sense of solemnity to the services.

- **Young women must find the right balance between *tefillat yahid* and *tefillat tzibur*.** Lacking the formal obligation of public prayer, women have more opportunity to be flexible in their prayers. Still, they must become comfortable - and according to some approaches, even actively encouraged to participate - in themen's *minyan*.

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